

Hall of Fame 2023

SUSAN W. MURLEY

Co-Managing Partner, WilmerHale
Boston

From the time that Susan W. Murley joined Hale & Dorr (now WilmerHale), she took on every extra task she was asked to perform, whether it was interviewing law students, mentoring newer associates or running the summer program.

She thrived in the capacity, so the firm continued requesting that she take on additional leadership roles. In 2012, she was asked to become co-managing partner, making her the first woman to lead the venerable firm and one of very few women to lead one of America's 100 largest.

"I never sought to lead the firm, but it's a privilege to sit here," she says.

In this role, Murley has prioritized continuing WilmerHale's financial success while building a more diverse firm. The raw numbers suggest Murley has had an impact. In the time since she took the reins, the firm's profits per partner has more than doubled. Meanwhile, the ranks of women and of color in leadership positions have risen significantly. Today, nearly half of WilmerHale's management committee is made up of women and 28 percent of its members are attorneys of color. Similarly, 60 percent of WilmerHale's legal department chairs



are women and 20 percent of its chairs are attorneys of color.

"The decisions we make as a firm and the advice we give our clients is simply better and more informed when you have a diversity of views and perspectives," says Murley.

Murley also feels gratified that under her watch, the firm's financial performance hasn't come at the expense of its commitment to pro bono work.

She notes that WilmerHale's U.S.-based attorneys worked an average of 134 pro bono hours, representing 7.6 percent of billable hours, last year with 94 percent of its attorneys working at least 20 hours.

"Doing good while doing well is a much-used cliché, but it's true," she says.

Beyond Murley's management responsibilities, she still maintains a busy corporate practice of her own, advising boards of directors and executive teams on financings, mergers and acquisitions and governance.

Just last year, Murley represented longtime educational publisher Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, now a learning technology company, in a \$2.8 billion sale to private equity firm Veritas Capital.

This was a particularly memorable engagement for Murley, not only because of the role she played advising the board, but also because it involved the sale of a local institution.

"HMH had been around as long as my law firm, more than 100 years," she says.

Murley is also proud of the pro bono corporate governance and transactional work she's done for nonprofits like the Boston Athletic Association, which operates the Boston Marathon, and Bridge Over Troubled Waters, which provides services to at-risk, runaway and homeless youth.

"It is a privilege to use my knowledge and experience to assist nonprofit organizations that are working hard to strengthen our community," she says.

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